

## Filumena Marturano

### Language and culture in standard Arabic and Egyptian vernacular translations

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The translation of theatrical works in which dialects are present is a delicate process of mediation requiring a careful valuation of formal and communicative textual aspects. For mediating between two different universes the translator must firstly choose whether to transmit the original text language variation – through the strategies available in the target language – or whether to ignore it, transferring the script into the standard target language. Accordingly, both the source oriented and the target-oriented translations are possible and produce results worthy of being examined, from the perspective of a wide interdisciplinary area including linguistic and cultural studies. Arabic versions of Italian theatrical and narrative works, originally characterized by the use of dialects, show a variety of solutions to the problems arising while translating, which are interesting for reflecting on the general decision-making process of translation and on the language choices adopted in a given target culture. My contribution aims to present the outcomes of a comparison between the original text of *Filumena Marturano* (1946), one of the comedies written by the Italian dramatist Eduardo De Filippo, and both the standard Arabic translation (2006) and the Egyptian vernacular script of its stage representation (1998). In the source text there are many Neapolitan vernacular expressions, as dialect is a major feature in typifying characters and environment, but the translations resort to a general neutralization of the foreign culture, through standardization or homogenization with the Egyptian culture.

**Keywords:** translation, dialect, theatre, source language, target language

#### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This article deals with the issue of translation into Arabic of literary texts originally written in a foreign dialect; specifically, I have chosen to compare an Italian Neapolitan<sup>2</sup> theatrical text, *Filumena*

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<sup>1</sup> I thank my colleague and friend Silvana Bebawy for her precious advice in analyzing some passages in Egyptian Arabic.

<sup>2</sup> Neapolitan is here defined as a dialect according to a sense widely shared by the national speech community, which considers the non-standard languages locally spoken as dialects of the Italian language and not as autonomous varieties. On

Marturano,<sup>3</sup> to two translations of it, one into standard Arabic and the other into the Egyptian vernacular.<sup>4</sup>

Translation is a delicate process of mediation in which both formal and content aspects must be carefully evaluated together with the pragmatic ones, as a variety of translations is possible and it depends on the approaches the translator chooses in mediating between two different universes and, at the same time, comparing cultures, as “translators interpret source-culture phenomena in the light of their own culture-specific knowledge of that culture” (Nord 1997: 34).

Therefore, approaching a source text typified by language variation, translators can choose to transmit this feature, through the strategies available in the target language, or to ignore it, transferring the script into the standard (or the vernacular) target language, namely they can carry out a source-oriented translation or a target-oriented one (Nord 1991: 1997). It is a challenging process for both translators and scholars, as the cultural transfer involves choices, strategies, and

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the basis of considerations of mutual intelligibility, and not taking into account the speakers' opinions and attitudes in respect to non-standard languages, the International Organization for Standardization recognizes Neapolitan (autonym: *napulitano*) as a group of languages (ISO 639-2: *nap*) spread over a wide area of Southern Italy <[https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/code\\_changes.php](https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/code_changes.php)>. It is worth noting that there is no standard Neapolitan commonly used by the population or by literary authors and that Eduardo's comedies mostly present “a speech that oscillates between dialect and language,” which is difficult for translation into a foreign language (Rotondi 2013: 209-210), as several studies on the English translations of Eduardo's texts show (in this regard see Romanelli 2002; De Martino Cappuccio 2010, 2011; Rotondi 2012, 2013; Vincent in De Blasi and Sabbatino 2015).

<sup>3</sup> My contribution is mainly addressed to the analysis of some linguistic aspects and not to literary criticism - an extensive critical literature on Eduardo's theatre has been already developed, and a thorough study on the reception of the comedy in Egypt would require a specific field research, as the available resources on the Web are quite sparse. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning a short article published on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1998 in the Italian daily *Il Tirreno*: “Eduardo de Filippo does not fail to tear tears and applause even in Cairo, where for the whole month of November the first edition in Arabic of “Filumena Marturano,” directed by Mariano Rigillo, is staged at the National Theatre, at the invitation of the Italian Cultural Institute. Played by two vedettes of the Egyptian prose theatre, Yehya El Fakharany (Domenico Soriano) and Dalal Abdel Aziz (Filumena), the comedy is a great success with the public (the theatre was 70% full every night, say the impresarios) and critics. “It is free from the vulgarity typical of certain Egyptian comedies,” wrote Abla Rwini in the columns of *Al Akhbar*, while for Nabil Badran, critic of the weekly *Akher Saa*, “The ability of the director Rigillo was to have adapted perfectly the spirit of the drama to the emotions of our people.” The three Egyptian actors who play Filumena's children perform in a Neapolitan repertoire (*Funiculi funiculà*, *Munasterio e' Santa Chiara*, *'O Sole mio*) with Arabic accents, and get open stage applause, as well as some gestures of the interpreter of Filumena, which sometimes seem to be traced to those of Titina de Filippo, Pupella Maggio or Sofia Loren, three Filumenas that have gone down in history” (my translation, from: “Filumena Marturano all'ombra delle Piramidi”, *Il Tirreno*

<<https://ricerca.gelocal.it/iltirreno/archivio/iltirreno/1998/11/26/LT306.html?ref=search>>).

<sup>4</sup> In this article, standard Arabic is transliterated according to writing, while the Egyptian vernacular is transliterated to reproduce the pronunciation, including combinatorial changes, such as phenomena of assimilation, dissimilation, contraction, fall of sounds, and monophthongization of descending diphthongs.

tools that can lead to severely “neutralize the alterity of the foreign text and to bring it closer to the expectations of the receiving audience” (De Martino Cappuccio 2011: 47) or, on the contrary, to transmit the source text culture’s values and aspects, two methods defined by Lawrence Venuti (1995) as “domestication” and “foreignization.”

In Eduardo’s theatre there are many elements that feature characters, places, and behaviours as Neapolitan, but the universality of the message emerges as a prevalent trait, like Ardito argues in his introduction to four plays translated into English: “Eduardo offers a natural mix of Italian and easily accessible Neapolitan in most of his plays. Their success in Italy and indeed in translation and performance throughout the world is a measure of the universality of his means of expression” (De Filippo, Ardito and Tinniswood 1992: xi). Moreover, Ardito quotes the playwright’s words about the choice of using Neapolitan dialect in his works: “I use dialect as a means of expression, and nothing more. Just as I use standard Italian. The content of the play is what matters, not the words. Devoid of content all we’re left with is a mass of inanimate sounds, and if they happen to be in dialect it would just be so much folklore, which I detest” (De Filippo, Ardito and Tinniswood 1992: x). Despite this assertion, language plays a fundamental role: the author of *Filumena Marturano* makes the main character of his play speak in a language that signals not only the link with the city of Naples, but also social belonging. Indeed, authorial choices concerning language varieties and registers provide the text with social and cultural connotations, which in translation risk being neutralized or modified. We will see how the dramatic text is adapted to standard Arabic, a language that Arabs do not speak in ordinary life, and to the Egyptian vernacular, the common people’s language, without encompassing the use of sociolects.

## 2. Drama plot

*Filumena Marturano* is one of the most famous dramas the Italian playwright, art director, and actor Eduardo De Filippo<sup>5</sup> (1900-1984) wrote, inspired by a real story. It was staged for the first time at the

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<sup>5</sup> Eduardo De Filippo is regarded as one of the greatest playwrights of the 1900s and as the creator of a unique and distinctive style, in the dialect comedy, that took the name of “The Theatre of Eduardo,” starting from the 40s, when he emerged with some memorable works such as *Napoli milionaria!* (“Millionaire Naples,” 1945), *Questi fantasmi* (“These Ghosts,” 1946), *Filumena Marturano* (1946), and *Le voci di dentro* (“Inner Voices,” 1948). His career as a writer of comedies, begun in the 20s, was recognized with national and international awards, Nobel nomination included, and his social and political commitment, impressive in most of the dramas he wrote, was fulfilled in the Italian Parliament too, when in 1981 President Sandro Pertini nominated him senator for life. Eduardo’s comedies were collected by the author himself in *Cantata dei giorni pari* (“Cantata of the Even Days,” comedies written between 1920 and 1942) and *Cantata dei giorni dispari* (“Cantata of the Odd Days,” comedies written between 1945 and 1973), both published by Einaudi.

Politeama Theatre in Naples on 7th November 1946 and it was the basis for several adaptations, among which a first film version in 1951, starring Eduardo and his sister Titina,<sup>6</sup> who had acted *Filumena* in the first theatre performance too, and a second one titled *Matrimonio all'italiana* (“Marriage Italian style”) in 1964, starring Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni. Its dramatic text has been translated into more than seventy languages.

In short, it is the story of a woman who, pretending to be dying, manages to get married to her partner. Although on first reading the drama merely seems to portray a former prostitute who wants to tighten the bond of marriage in order to protect her and her three children, it encompasses a series of motives denouncing the state of loss and the lacerations of the Italian society derived from the Second World War<sup>7</sup>. In this perspective the characters do not only represent themselves, but also different layers of society: the intellectual class (Umberto), the working class (Michele), and the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie (Riccardo), initially in conflict with each other but then collaborative in the construction of a new united family/nation symbolized by *Filumena*’s role: *Filumena* dreams of bringing together all her family as much as Italy aims to gather its citizens under a single flag so that they can feel united again. The husband and father, Domenico Soriano, represents instead an unscrupulous capitalism<sup>8</sup>: he fights to know which one is his legitimate son, so to favour him, but in the end he surrenders before the insistence of *Filumena* on considering all three equal (Ubbidente 2010: 135-139).

### 3. The Arabic *Filumena*

*Filumena Marturano*’s script is mainly written in Neapolitan dialect (Naples variety), with some dialogues in Italian. The play text reflects a complex sociolinguistic situation in which code-switching

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<sup>6</sup> Titina had previously acted minor roles in the comedies of her brother, who finally created a character especially made for her: *Filumena*. The first performances of the play did not garner the great success which Eduardo was accustomed to, but when Eduardo decided a new rehearsal before the debut in Rome, Titina asked him to allow her to decide for herself how to play the role. Thus, after twenty-five repeat performances in Naples, the drama was a great success and Titina was recognized as an exceptionally good actress (Fischer 2007: 68). In 1962 Eduardo took the comedy on tour to Poland, Hungary, Austria, and the Soviet Union.

<sup>7</sup> Different readings of the play’s message can be given, but Eduardo himself provided this key to interpret the play, during a dialogue-interview with Zeffirelli, on the eve of the London performance. He highlighted the symbolic value of *Filumena Marturano*’s characters and situations in the aftermath of a long war whose destruction and divisions had to be overcome with the moral and civil reconstruction (Ubbidente 2010: 135-136).

<sup>8</sup> Domenico Soriano is portrayed not as a self-made man, but as a rich confectioner who inherited his wealth, which he handles unscrupulously, and who is used to commanding other people, including *Filumena* (Ubbidente 2010: 137).

and code-mixing phenomena occur: Italian, a language dominant on social and cultural levels, contrasts with Neapolitan, perceived as subordinate. High and popular contexts intertwine; implicit and explicit contents are exploited by Eduardo to typify the drama's characters and plot, generating humour and emotional involvement.

It is the most widely performed Eduardo's play, both in Italy and abroad. Thanks to the actor and art director Mariano Rigillo<sup>9</sup> it was staged in Cairo too, at the National Theatre,<sup>10</sup> encountering the audience's enthusiastic reception,<sup>11</sup> in 1998, the same year in which the most recent English version,<sup>12</sup> starring Judi Dench, was performed. The play was acted by an Egyptian troupe and needed a careful work of translation into the Egyptian vernacular.

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<sup>9</sup> Rigillo was born in Naples on September 12th 1939 and established himself as a theatre actor in the 60s, both in classical and modern repertoire, after studying at the National Academy of Dramatic Art with Orazio Costa and Sergio Tofano. In 1969 he made his debut in the cinema with *Metti una sera a cena* (Giuseppe Patroni Griffi, 1969), followed by other films, such as *Bronte: cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno mai raccontato* (Florestano Vancini, 1972), *Regina* (Salvatore Piscicelli, 1987), *Il postino* (Michael Radford, 1994), *Un uomo per bene* (Maurizio Zaccaro, 1999). He started later to work on television acting in *Il Mulino del Po* (Sandro Bolchi, 1971), *La morte di Danton* (Mario Missiroli, 1972), *La trilogia della villeggiatura* (Mario Missiroli, 1975) etc. At the theatre he performed *Masaniello* (Elvio Porta and Armando Pugliese, 1974), an interpretation considered as his greatest success. In 1981 he staged *Pescatori*, and in 1993 *Zingari*, by Raffaele Viviani. He currently directs the Acting School of the Teatro Stabile in Naples.

<sup>10</sup> *Filumena Marturano's* performance took place in the oldest Egyptian theatre, the National Theatre (*al-Masrah al-qawmi*), built in 1870, one year after the construction of the Khedivial Opera House, which was destroyed in 1971 by a devastating fire. Both theatres were built at the time of Khedive Ismail, on the occasion of the Suez Canal inauguration, to host the performances of the Comédie Française, in al-'Azbakiyya area, where Bonaparte's troops had already been entertained with theatrical performances. The National Theatre, so called only after the 1952 Revolution, was then known as the al-'Azbakiyya Theatre and since 1885 it hosted Egyptian troupes (El-Aref 2014; <<https://www.cairoopera.org/museum.php>>). In 2008 also this building was seriously damaged by a fire; in 2014 the reconstruction works were completed and the theatre reopened.

<sup>11</sup> An interesting account of this experience was given by Rigillo in a Conference titled "Eduardo De Filippo e il teatro del mondo," held at the University of Naples "Federico II" on October 23rd and 24th 2014, for the 30th anniversary of Eduardo's death. The video, whose script is quoted in this article as De Filippo and Rigillo 1998, is available at the following link: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yg80x-RNSvE>>. A chapter of Sabbatino and Pasquale 2015, entitled "Eduardo e io al Cairo!" also testifies to this experience.

<sup>12</sup> There are a few English translations of Eduardo's comedy, among which the following are mentioned by Jocelyne Vincent in De Blasi and Sabbatino (2015): Carlo Ardito's version (first edition in 1976) broadcast at BBC Radio 4, starring Billie Whitelaw as Filumena (1988); Waterhouse and Hall's version (1978), staged at the Lyric Theatre in London and directed by Franco Zeffirelli, with Joan Plowright as Filumena; Maria Tucci's version (1996), staged in Williamstown and New York in 1997/98, performed by the translator herself; Timberlake Wertenbaker's version (1998), staged at the Piccadilly Theatre, starring Judi Dench as Filumena.

It had already appeared in standard Arabic in 1981,<sup>13</sup> translated by Salama Muhammad Soliman<sup>14</sup> and edited by the Italian Cultural Institute in Cairo, but without being performed in such a version. Even in Italy there had been attempts to translate into standard Italian – to “Italianize” – some of De Filippo’s most important works, but the character of Filumena thoroughly convinces only if she speaks in Neapolitan<sup>15</sup> and many dialogues are built on linguistic games, which in the original text are based on dialect in contrast to standard Italian.

When Rigillo agreed to direct the stage representation,<sup>16</sup> the colloquial quality was considered fundamental for the good result of transposition. That is why it was decided to translate the text into the vernacular variety, an operation conducted by four translators<sup>17</sup> working determinedly for more than a month; in this way the fundamental feature of the play text, of being written and recited in

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<sup>13</sup> This translation of *Filumena Marturano* falls within the context of Italian literature translated into Arabic. Indeed, in the last century, thanks to a good number of Italianists, some classics of Italian literature have been published in Arabic; among them only a few examples are here mentioned: *Fontamara* (Muṣṭafā Kāmil Munīb, 1941), *Pinocchio* (Ṭāhā Fawzī, 1949), *Cuore* (Ṭāhā Fawzī, 1957), *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (Muḥammad 'Ismā'il Muḥammad, 1960), *I promessi sposi* (Ṭāhā Fawzī, 1968), and *Il Gattopardo* ('Īsā al-Nā'urī, 1973). Works by authors such as Moravia, Calvino, Deledda, Gadda, Tobino, Fenoglio, Buzzati, Brancati, Fo, Eco, and Tabucchi have been translated too.

<sup>14</sup> Salama Muhammad Soliman was a Full Professor at the University of Ayn Shams, Faculty of Languages (*al-'Alsun*). An Italianist and translator of important literary works, including many comedies by Eduardo De Filippo, he received a special award from the Italian Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Heritage. Among De Filippo’s works, he translated: *Natale in casa Cupiello*, 1931 (*'Īd Milād fī bayt Kūbiyillū*, 1982), *Napoli milionaria!*, 1945 (*Nābulī malyūnirā*, 1986), *Questi fantasmi*, 1946 (*al-'Ašbāh*, 1980), *Filumena Marturano*, 1946 (*Filūminā Mārtūrānū*, 1981 and 2006), *Le voci di dentro*, 1948 (*'Ašwāt al-'a'māq*, 1983), *Mia famiglia*, 1955 (*'Āylat-ī*, 1980), *Il sindaco del rione Sanità*, 1960 (*'Umdat ḥayy Sānitā*, 1997), and *Il contratto*, 1967 (*al-'Aqd*, 1997). Soliman devoted himself also to the translation of other Italian theatrical works such as Carlo Goldoni’s *Trilogia della villeggiatura*, 1761 (*Tulāṭiyyat al-iṣṭifāf*, 1981), Ugo Betti’s *Corruzione al Palazzo di giustizia*, 1944 (*Inḥirāf fī qaṣr al-'adāla*, 1984), and *La signora è da buttare*, 1967 (*al-Sayyida lā taṣluḥu 'illā li-l-ramy*, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Note that the vernacular spoken by Filumena is perceived both as a regionalect and a sociolect, and identifies the character as living in Naples and belonging to a low social class, in a certain sense as the Cockney is connected to a specific area of London and to the working classes.

<sup>16</sup> The idea of staging *Filumena Marturano* in Egypt came from a previous experience (1996) of Mariano Rigillo who was invited to Nairobi by the ambassador Roberto di Leo to supervise the mise-en-scène of that play, translated into English and performed by a Kenyan company. The performance was echoed in Cairo, where, the following year, Rigillo participated in the International Experimental Theatre Festival in Cairo as a guest star. For the interest of the Italian Cultural Institute in Cairo and the Egyptian National Theatre, this masterpiece of the Eduardian dramaturgy was brought to an African stage again, but this time in a local language, the Egyptian vernacular Arabic.

<sup>17</sup> In De Blasi and Sabbatino (2015) Rigillo mentions that two of the translators not only spoke Italian perfectly, but also studied at the “Silvio D’Amico” National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Rome.

dialect, apparently would have been maintained, contrary to the translation into standard Arabic which seems to convey only the story.<sup>18</sup> But did it really happen?

#### 4. Varieties in contact

The first matter to consider before discussing form and content of this drama's translations is that Egyptian Arabic, specifically the Cairo variety, is a mother tongue shared by a large community, an urban vernacular that has become a sort of "national standard dialect,"<sup>19</sup> whereas the Neapolitan dialect is limited to a narrower speech community, although it has a recognised cultural status.<sup>20</sup>

In the source text dialect conflicts with Italian, the national language, creating the effect of two cultural realities, while in the Egyptian Arabic version, where the vernacular is taken as the basic code of dialogues, translators chose to emphasize Filumena's speech not by resorting to a sub-variety of the urban vernacular or to another diatopic variety as it could be expected, but by using non-sense utterances to fill her linguistic gaps with invented and incomprehensible words. Likewise, the choice of translating into standard Arabic, sometimes switching to another diatopic variety (Upper Egypt dialect – Saidi Arabic, ISO 639-3: aec) and sometimes using solecisms, does not attain the goal of maintaining the sociolinguistic pattern of Filumena Marturano as diglottic. In addition, the use of the Upper Egypt dialect instead of an urban vernacular (the translator could have used a variety typical of the poorest strata of the population) makes the character associated with traditional life in the countryside, a choice that seems to reflect the Egyptian cultural contrast between centre and periphery, modernity and tradition. In a certain way, this can be considered a strategy of

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<sup>18</sup> We have to take into account that translation concerns the equivalence of linguistic content but also involves cultures which are matrices of extra-linguistic information important for readers/audience; thus, "the translation of non-standard language is a problem since it clearly also involves culture" and "translators should not only be aware of the issues involved in non-standard usage but also of the linguistic resources at their disposal to achieve an 'equivalent effect' in their translation" (Lung 2000: 267). *Filumena's* translators tried to reproduce the oral quality of the play, its performability, by using a non-standard language, "which in the source text shape[s] dramatic characterization and position[s] the character within a certain community or group and within a specific linguistic tradition" (Perteghella 2002: 45), but this process resulted not sufficient to transfer to the target text the original social connotations.

<sup>19</sup> The Cairene vernacular has acquired a prestigious status (linked to the concepts of modernity, new media, education, cultural environments) and it is recognized as such by the whole community of Egyptian speakers.

<sup>20</sup> The Neapolitan vernacular, which is spoken by a relatively small community of people living in or linked to Naples, has an unquestionable place in the Italian culture, namely in poetry, narrative, theatre, and song. Not only is it a means of communication but it has also a symbolic role, "an emblem of the city and its culture: indeed, this dialect refers to a precise and often stereotyped cultural universe, with the consequence that through identification with the dialect one identifies with the values it conveys" (Di Salvo, Matrisciano and Maulella 2018: 78, my translation). Add to this that dialect can also be associated with a low level of education and/or to a location within neighbourhoods tending to preserve traditions, ways of life and linguistic uses (De Blasi 2002).



domestication, but not a way “to localize a dialect or slang into another specific to the target-language frame”<sup>21</sup> (Perteghella 2002: 50). Indeed, the Arabic version of Eduardo’s comedy signed by Soliman undergoes a general standardization procedure, exceptionally introducing elements suitable for dialect localization.

### 5. Strategies in translation: switching from a variety to another<sup>22</sup>

The analysis of the following excerpt will show some strategies the translators have used to emphasize the contrast among the different language varieties spoken by characters in the source text where the use of Neapolitan dialect helps to link action to a particular place and a specific popular culture.

DIANA E... come sta?... Sempre in agonia? ... È venuto il prete?

FILUMENA (*dominandosi con affettata cortesia, s’avvicina lentamente alla giovane*): Il prete è venute... (*Diana sorpresa si alza e indietreggia di qualche passo*) ...e *confromme* ha visto che stavo in agonizzazione... (*Felina*) Lèvate ‘o càmmese!

DIANA (*che veramente non ha compreso*): Come?

FILUMENA (c.s.): Lèvate ‘o càmmese!

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<sup>21</sup> In this regard, it is worth mentioning that among Eduardo’s comedies, *Napoli milionaria!* stands out for the language choice of its English translator, Peter Tinniswood, who drew on a variety of English spoken in Liverpool. In the note on his adaptation, he explains: “I’ve done this adaptation of Eduardo’s play in the accents of my native city. Not its dialect. I’m not keen on dialect writing in English. It relies too much on a heavily-coated treacled ear and too little on love and sympathy and affection. [...] I’ve tried to catch the rhythms and rhymes and the lilt and the swagger that reflect the verve and vigour of my native city” (De Filippo, Ardito and Tinniswood 1992: 248). But above all it is the English adaptation of *Natale in casa Cupiello* (*Ducking Out*) that shows an interesting language choice. The events are “transferred” to a town in West Lancashire, Stott’s homeland, during the 80s (Eduardo’s play debuted in 1931), the characters belong to the working class and their language is full of harsh and slang expressions (De Martino Cappuccio 2011: 59). This strategy is what Perteghella defines as dialect localization, namely “to localize a dialect or slang into another specific to the target-language frame. Often, characters proper names are changed. Setting, topical, and cultural references are changed to target ones. This is very much a domesticating, acculturating strategy, which borders on adaptation and version” (Perteghella 2002: 50). About Perteghella’s study on translating dialect and slang for the stage, it is useful recalling the “five strategies for theatrical transposition of dialect and slang” she has defined: 1. dialect compilation; 2. pseudo-dialect translation; 3. parallel dialect translation; 4. dialect localization; 5. standardization.

<sup>22</sup> In the English versions of Eduardo’s play Neapolitan is translated into standard English and therefore the code-switching phenomena, significant in the original work, are avoided, as well as dialect expressions are removed. Accordingly, it would be of no use to quote here one of the translations made for the British or American stages; I have decided to personally translate into English the passages analysed, trying to make their contents as clear as possible to readers who are not familiar with the Italian language and in particular the Neapolitan dialect. I hope they will forgive me for the length of the notes which are intended to help a comparison among Eduardo’s text, Soliman’s translation, and Rigillo’s script.



ROSALIA (*s'accorge che Diana neanche questa volta ha compreso e per evitare il peggio, le consiglia prudentemente*): Levatevi questo. (E su se stessa scuote, con due dita, la camiciola del suo abito, perché, finalmente, Diana possa comprendere a volo che Filumena allude al cànice d'infermiera).

Diana, con timore istintivo, si toglie il cànice.

FILUMENA (*che ha seguito il gesto di Diana, senza staccarle gli occhi di dosso*) Pòsalo ncopp' 'a seggia... Pòsalo ncopp' 'a seggia.

ROSALIA (*prevedendo l'incomprensione di Diana*) Mettetelo sopra la sedia.

Diana esegue.

FILUMENA (*riprende il tono cortese di prima*): Ha visto che agonizzavo e ha consigliato a don Domenico Soriano di perfezionare il vincolo in estremo. (Allude al prete. Diana per darsi un contegno, non sapendo che fare, prende dal «centro» una rosa e finge di aspirarne il profumo. Filumena la fulmina con il tono opaco della sua voce) Pos' 'a rosa!

ROSALIA (*pronta*) Posate la rosa<sup>23</sup>. (De Filippo 1951: 21-22)

ديانا .. كيف حالها؟ .. ألا زالت تحتضر؟ .. هل جاء القسيس؟  
 فيلومينا (تقترب من الفتاة مسيطرة على أعصابها وفي رقة مفتعلة) جاء القسيس... (ديانا تؤخذ على غرة فترتد إلى الوراء خطوات عدة)... «واذ لما» رأى أنى «أستحضر» وفي «خشونة»، «اجلعي البانتو»  
 ديانا (التي لم تفهم حقا ما قالتها) ماذا؟  
 فيلومينا (كالسابق) «اجلعي البانتو»!  
 روزاليا (ترى أن ديانا لم تفهم في المرة الثانية أيضا فتتصحبها بحذر لتمنع تدهور الموقف) اخلي هذا (تمسك طرف البالطو بإصبعين وتهزهما مرات عديدة فتدرك ديانا أخيرا أن فيلومينا تعني بالبطلو التمريض)  
 ديانا تخلع البالطو بخوف غريزي  
 فيلومينا (التي تتبعت حركة ديانا دون أن ترفع عينها) «حطيه فوج الكرسي» ... «فوج الكرسي»  
 روزاليا (متوقعة ألا تفهم ديانا) ضعيه فوق المقعد.  
 ديانا تنفذ

<sup>23</sup> “Diana: And how is she?... Still close to death?... Has the priest come?/ Filumena (dominating herself with affected courtesy, she slowly approaches the young woman): The priest came ... (surprised, Diana gets up and backs away few steps)... and as soon as he saw that I was in my last hours of life... (catlike) Take the white coat off!/ Diana (who hasn't understood): Pardon./ Filumena: Take the white coat off!/ Rosalia (realizes that Diana has not still understood and, in order to avoid the worst, prudently advises her): Take this off (she shakes her shirt so that, finally, Diana can immediately understand that Filumena alludes to the nurse's white coat)./ Diana, with instinctive fear, takes the white coat off./ Filumena (who follows Diana's gesture, without taking her eyes off her): Put it on the chair... Put it on the chair./ Rosalia (preempting Diana's incomprehension): Put it on the chair./ Diana does so./ Filumena (going back to the polite tone of before): He saw that I was close to death and advised Don Domenico Soriano to honour the bond at the end. (She alludes to the priest. Diana, who doesn't know what to do, takes a rose from the vase smelling its perfume. Filumena strikes her by the low tone of her voice) Put the rose down!/ Rosalia (immediately): Put the rose down” (my translation).

فيلومينا (تعود الى اللهجة الرقيقة المفتعلة) رأى أنى «أستحضر» فنصح دون دومينكو سوريانو أن يسمو بعلاقتنا، ويتزوجني زواج «الرمح الأخير». تلمح الى القسيس. (ديانا تحاول أن تتخلص من حرجها فلا تدري ماذا تفعل سوى التقاط وردة من فوق المائدة وتتصنع أنها تشم رائحتها. فيلومينا تسحقها بلهجة صوتها الغامض) «رجعي الوردة»!

روزاليا (على الفور) ضعي الوردة<sup>24</sup>.

(De Filippo and Soliman 2006: 30-31)

DIANA Hiyya 'amla 'eh dilwa'ti? Lissa barḍuh bi-t-ṭalla' fi r-rūḥ? Wi-l-'asīs gīh wala lā?

FILUMENA Lā, gīh, ya ḥabibt-ī. La'ā-ni lissa b-aṭalla' fi r-rūḥ... Isla'i r-rūb wi-s-saltu baṭāṭa, is-saltu baṭāṭa!

ROSALIA Bi-ti-'ūl-l-ik ya 'uḥt: iḥla'i l-baltū.

FILUMENA Suti ḥilba su fulla is-surs karawya. Suti ḥilba su fulla is-surs karawya.

ROSALIA Bi-ti-'ūl-l-ik ḥuṭṭi-h fō' il-kursi.

FILUMENA 'Akammil-l-ik ba'a ya ḥabibt: lamma gīh il-'asīs yiṭalla' ir-rūḥ, naṣaḥ is-sayyid Domenico 'inna-hu ... il-'ilā'a illi bī-na wi-yitgawwiz-ni zawāg. [...] Gawāz yirudd ir-rūḥ ya 'uḥt. Sagga'i illi surdawawa. Sagga'i illi surdawawa.

ROSALIA Bi-ti-'ūl-l-ik ya-ḥt-i ragga'i l-warda. 'Inti 'eh? 'Inti miš bi-tifhami 'arabi?<sup>25</sup> (De Filippo and Rigillo 1998)

This is an interesting example of short circuit in communication.<sup>26</sup> The characters involved are three: Filumena, her servant Rosalia, and the nurse Diana, who has an affair with Domenico. Diana enters

<sup>24</sup> “Diana: ... How is she doing? ... Is she still dying? Did the priest come?/ Filumena (approaching the girl, controlling her nerves in false tenderness): The priest came... (Diana is taken by surprise, and she moves back several steps) ... When he saw that I “was calling for” and (roughly) Take the white coat off./ Diana (who has not really understood what she said): What?/ Filumena (as before): Take the white coat off!/ Rosalia (realizing that Diana did not understand for the second time, she carefully advises her to prevent the situation from worsening): Take this off (she holds the extremity of the white coat with two fingers and shakes it several times, so Diana realizes that Filumena means the nurse’s white coat)./ Diana takes the white coat off with instinctive fear./ Filumena (who follows Diana’s gesture, without raising her eyes) “Put it on the chair” ... “On the chair”./ Rosalia (expecting Diana not to understand): Put it on the chair./ Diana does so./ Filumena (returning to her soft, false tone of voice): He saw that I “was calling for” and advised Don Domenico Soriano to honor our relationship and to marry me “in extremity”. She alludes to the priest. (Diana tries to get rid of her embarrassment. She does not know what to do except to pick up a rose from the table and smell it. Filumena crushes her through the tone of her low voice): “Move the rose back!”/ Rosalia (immediately): Put the rose” (my translation).

<sup>25</sup> “Diana: How is she doing now? Is she still dying? Did the priest come or not?/ Filumena: No, he came, dear, and found me still dying... take the white coat off, blah, blah, blah!/ Rosalia: She’s saying, sister: “take the coat off”/ Filumena: Blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, blah./ Rosalia: She’s saying to you: “Put it on the chair!”/ Filumena: I finish, dear: when the priest came, as my soul was going to meet its maker, he advised Mr. Domenico to [...] the relationship between us and he married me. The marriage gave me back the soul, sister. Blah, blah, blah./ Rosalia: She’s saying: “Move the rose back”. What’s on you? Don’t you understand Arabic?” (my translation).

<sup>26</sup> The lack of communication among different social layers is one of the aspects emerging from the drama; Filumena is typified as “the Neapolitan”, as a woman of the people, contrasting with the higher cultural status represented by other characters (Domenico, Diana, the lawyer Nocella).

the scene speaking to Domenico, without realising that Filumena and Rosalia are there, in a corner of the room. The three female characters have different language skills: Diana speaks and understands only Italian; Filumena speaks only Neapolitan and does not understand a high level of Italian; Rosalia claims to speak Italian but her speech presents deviances from Italian, strings which are technically ungrammatical but intelligible.

In Soliman's translation standard Arabic is the matrix variety,<sup>27</sup> while the Cairene vernacular and a generic Upper Egypt vernacular are embedded with some short utterances. The outcome is a very funny dialogue in which Filumena speaks in dialect and Rosalia tries to translate into a "special kind" of standard language to make Diana understand.

A comparison among source text and target translations shows the following features.

### 5.1. Source-text

In Neapolitan, the sentence "Lèvate o càmmese" is pronounced twice by Filumena, because Diana does not understand Filumena's order which corresponds to the Italian "Levati il camice" [take the white coat off!]. Also the command to put the white coat on the chair is not understood, being given in strict Neapolitan dialect – "Pòsalo ncopp' 'a seggia... Pòsalo ncopp' 'a seggia" – as well as the following one to set down a rose "Pos' 'a rosa!"

### 5.2. Target translation 1 (Standard Arabic)

In standard Arabic the translator highlights some clues by quote marks and resorts to improper sentences, e.g. *iġla'ī al-bāntū* (اجلعي البانتو), a deviance from the grammatically correct form *iḥla'ī al-bālṭū* (اخلعي البالطو) [take off the over-dress/white coat]. The comic effect is amplified by the

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<sup>27</sup> The strategy of standardization is especially "suitable for scholarly editions of drama, but also for productions that universalize some of the issues or ideals in the foreign play" (Perteghella 2002: 51). It is worthy of remark that the translator maintains some foreign cultural items and explains them in the footnotes. For instance, the term *basso* is translated into Arabic as *badrūm* and further described in a footnote (p. 11); a note at p. 41 is devoted to the Roman Catholic festivity of All Souls' Day; in three notes (p. 30, p. 40, p. 71) Soliman specifies that Filumena and Alfredo are speaking in the Neapolitan vernacular (at p. 30 the translator argues that he has chosen the Saidi dialect to translate Filumena's funny way of mixing Neapolitan with incorrect forms of Italian); a note at p. 40 explains the idiomatic expression "nu pòlice c' 'a tosse" (literally translated, though not with the same comic effect) and another note at p. 42 reveals the translator's awareness of the impossibility of finding a standard Arabic/Egyptian vernacular correspondence to the utterance "e terno 'e tre", typical of the Lotto's (an Italian lottery) jargon. In the English version by Wertenbaker (1998) it is translated as "makes three, bingo!", drawing on the target culture, while in Soliman's text there is only a reference to "good fortune": *yā li-ḥazzik bi-him!*, that means "how lucky you were with them", alluding to the death of Rosalia's husband and parents.

interposition of Rosalia that emphatically says *iḥla'ī hādā* (اخلعي هذا), touching the white coat.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the unfitting use of a verb, *'astahḍir* (أستحضر) [I call for], instead of *'uḥtaḍar* (أحتضر) [I agonize], incorrect on the semantic level, results appropriate to show Filumena's incompetence at speaking a 'proper' language.

Another strategy to epitomize Filumena's speaking as harshly popular is employed: the translator turns to an Upper Egypt<sup>29</sup> pronunciation of the preposition *fawqa* (فوق), so resulting *fōg* (فوج). In the sentence *ḥuṭṭīh fōg ik-kursī ... fōg ik-kursī* (حطيه فوج الكرسي ... فوج الكرسي) [put it on the chair! on the chair!] all the items are Egyptian vernacular. That is why, to make Diana understand, they are translated by Rosalia into the standard, saying: *ḍa'īh fawqa l-miq'ad* (ضعيه فوق المقعد) [put it on the chair!].

Finally, when Filumena orders Diana to set down the rose, she uses the verb *ragga'ī* (رجعي) that exists in both standard Arabic and Egyptian vernacular, with the meaning of “move back”, but does not usually occur as “set down”. The expression closest to the Italian utterance would be *ḍa'ī l-warda* (ضعي الوردة) [set down the rose], that is indeed Rosalia's translation for Diana.

### 5.3. Target translation 2 (Egyptian Arabic)

In the Egyptian vernacular version some non-sense expressions occur, e.g. Filumena's cue *isla'ī r-rūb wi-s-salṭu baṭāṭa, is-salṭu baṭāṭa!* [take the white coat off, blah blah blah] which Rosalia translates for Diana into *bi-ti-'ūl-l-ik ya 'uḥt: iḥla'ī l-balṭū* [she's saying, sister: “take the coat off”]. No deviance from *bāltū* into *bāntū*, as seen in the Target translation 1, occurs. Worthy of mention is Filumena's use of an improper imperative, *isla'ī*, which recalls the correct forms of *i'la'ī* and *iḥla'ī* [take off].

The following unintelligible cue *suti ḥilba su fulla i-surs karawya. suti ḥilba su fulla i-surs karawya* is a non-sense tongue-twister in which the only comprehensible words are *ḥilba* [fenugreek] and *karawya* [chamomile]. I suggest that a strategy of phoneme substitution is again carried out: *suti* instead of *ḥuṭṭi*, *surs* instead of *kurs*; *fulla* could be a deviance from *fō* (*fawqa*). This considering Rosalia's

<sup>28</sup> Gestural language helps to convey the meaning. In the original text Rosalia uses a courtesy form (second plural person) and, like in standard Arabic, she substitutes the word ‘cammese’ with a deictic, lacking the Italian/Arabic word to refer to the object.

<sup>29</sup> In a footnote, the translator explains that “Filumena bonds the Neapolitan dialect to Italian, creating expressions and words that arouse laughter” and underlines his willingness to translate these sentences into the dialect of Upper Egypt which is considered less prestigious than the Cairene urban vernacular. In this regard, the excerpt shows another example worthy of mention, the locution *al-ramaq al-'aḥīr* (الرمق الأخير) [last breath > in extremity] that is graphically rendered with *al-ramag al-'aḥīr* (الرمج الأخير), reflecting a phonological deviance typical of Upper Egypt variants /q/→/g/.

translation in the subsequent cue. Non-sense utterances seem to be used to emphasize the communication short circuit between Filumena and Diana, that causes a second intrusion of Rosalia who translates into a comprehensible Egyptian Arabic.

In the same excerpt the non-sense utterance *sagga'i illi surdawawa*. *Sagga'i illi surdawawa* occurs too, showing a possible substitution of *ragga'i*<sup>30</sup> with *sagga'i*, and of *wardāya* (*warda*) [rose] with *surdawawa*.

## 6. Rhetorical devices, lexical and phraseological features

Among the different strategies adopted by the translators, with the aim of trying to be faithful to the source text *skopos*,<sup>31</sup> the use of rhetorical devices plays a momentous role, like in the passage in which Domenico is talking to himself regretting not having understood that people have long been mocking him.

DOMENICO [...] Io songo n'ommo 'e niente! Io m'aggia mettere nnanz' 'o specchio e nun m'aggi' 'a stancà maie 'e me sputà nfaccia (*Con un lampo di odio negli occhi a Filumena*). Vicino a tte aggio iettata 'a vita mia: vinticin'anne 'e salute, 'e forza, 'e cervella, 'e giuventù! E che ato vuò? C'ato t'ha da da' Domenico Soriano? Pure 'o riesto 'e sta pelle, che nn'avite fatto chello ch'avite voluto vuie? (*Inveendo contro tutti, come fuori di sé*) Tutti hanno fatto chello che hanno voluto! (*Contro se stesso con disprezzo*) Mentre tu te credivi Giesù Cristo sciso nterra, tutte quante facevano chello ca vulevano d' 'a pella toia! (*Mostrando un po' tutti, con atto d'accusa*) Tu, tu, tu... 'o vico, 'o quartiere, Napule, 'o munno... Tutte quante m'hanno pigliato pe' fesso, sempe! [...]<sup>32</sup>. (De Filippo 1951: 8-9)

أنا تافه! يجب أن أقف أمام المرأة، ولا أكف عن البصق على وجهي. (مصدقاً ببريق من البغض في عيني فيلومينا) بجوارك.. أفنيت حياتي بجوارك.. أفنيت خمسة وعشرين عاماً من الصحة والعافية والعقل والشباب! ماذا تريدون غير هذا؟ ماذا أيضاً يجب أن يعطيك دومينكو سوريانو؟ أتريدون ما تبقى من لحمي الذي فعلت به ما شئتم؟ (صارخاً في الجميع كمن طاش لبه) كلهم فعلوا ما أرادوا (إلى نفسه في ازدراء) أما أنت فكنت

<sup>30</sup> This possible meaning makes us turn to the standard Arabic translation where *ragga'i* stays for *ḍa'i*.

<sup>31</sup> "Purpose", as defined by Vermeer (1978), quoted in Nord (1997: 29): "Each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose. The *skopos* rule thus reads as follows: translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function".

<sup>32</sup> "Domenico: I'm a nobody. I must stand in front of the mirror to spit, and spit again, at myself (looking at Filumena with a flash of hatred in his eyes). I threw my life away together with you: twenty-five years of health, strength, mind, and youth. What more do you want from me? What more can Domenico Soriano give you? Do you want the remains of my skin? You, all, already did what you wanted of it. (Inveighing against everybody, out of his mind) Everyone did what they wanted! (Against himself with contempt) You thought you were Jesus Christ on earth, while everyone were doing what they wanted with your skin. (Pointing at everyone, with indictment) You, you, you... the alley, the neighbourhood, Naples, the world... Everyone have always taken me for a stupid!" (my translation).

تحسب أنك المسيح على الأرض.. كلهم فعلوا ما أرادوا بلحمك! (مشيرا إلى أحدهم بإصبع الاتهام في كل مرة)  
أنت، أنت، أنت... الحارة، الحى، نابولي، الدنيا كلهم ضحكوا علي<sup>33</sup>!

(De Filippo and Soliman 2006: 13)

DOMENICO 'Ana tāfih, tāfih. Kull yōm iṣ-ṣubḥ lāzim 'abuṣṣ fi l-mirāya w-'atiff 'ala wiṣṣ-i. Tfūh. 'Aṣān 'aṣḥa 'afū' mi-l-ḥaṣal-li, ma'ūl, 'ana miṣ 'ādir 'aṣaddi' [...] ḥamsa wi-'iṣrīn sana 'addit-ik ṣiḥḥat-i, 'afyat-i wi-ṣabāb-i. 'āyza 'ēh 'aktar min kida? [...] 'āyza ti'kul-ni laḥm w-tirmī-ni 'aḍm. Kull in-nās kānu 'arḥim 'inn-i muḡaffal. 'Ana l-waḥid illi fāhim naḥs-uh il-Masiḥ 'ala l-'arḍ. Kullu-hum hina wi-hināk fi Nābuli, id-dunyā kulla-ha ḍaḥikit 'ala Domenico Soriano<sup>34</sup>. (De Filippo and Rigillo 1998)

The rhetorical devices employed in translating into Egyptian Arabic are: repetition, when Domenico echoes the cue 'ana tāfih [I'm insignificant] iterating the adjective; onomatopoeia, using *tfūh*, which imitates the sound of spitting, for indicating disgust; parenthesis, to explain the character's mood, when Domenico says 'aṣān 'aṣḥa 'afū' mi-l-ḥaṣal-li, ma'ūl, 'ana miṣ 'ādir 'aṣaddi' [in order to awake, to return from what happened to me... is it reasonable? I can't believe]; emphasis, through the introduction of a derogatory mark, *muḡaffal* [dumb], which is not explicitly expressed in the source text but only implied; hypernymy, by using *id-dunyā kulla-ha* instead of listing the parts of the environment surrounding him which are named in the standard Arabic translation ('anta, 'anta, 'anta... al-ḥāra, al-ḥāyy, al-dunyā kullu-hā).

In both versions, translators face the challenge of a cross-cultural transfer; the source text contains motives and concepts which need to be domesticated for the receiving audience. In this regard, some lexical and phraseological examples seem to me significant. In standard Arabic "e sta pelle" [this skin] is translated with *laḥm-ī* [my flesh] and in Egyptian Arabic the sentence "Pure 'o riesto 'e sta pelle, che nn'avite fatto chello ch'avite voluto vuie? [the rest of this skin, that you made what you want of it] results as *ti'kul-ni laḥm w-tirmī-ni 'aḍm* [you eat me and throw me out when I am a

<sup>33</sup> "Domenico: I'm insignificant! I should stand in front of the mirror, and never stop spitting in my face. (Staring with a flash of hatred in Filumena's eyes) Next to you... I destroyed my life next to you... I destroyed twenty-five years of health, wellness, mind, and youth! What do you want more? What else should Domenico Soriano give you? The remains of my flesh of which you did what you wanted? (Crying out to everyone as if someone has betrayed him) All of them did what they wanted (to himself in contempt). As for you, you thought you were Christ on earth... all of them did what they wanted with your flesh! (Pointing at everyone, each time to accuse them with his finger) You, you, you... the alley, the neighborhood, Naples, the whole world laughed at me" (my translation).

<sup>34</sup> "Domenico: I'm insignificant, insignificant. Every day in the morning I should look at myself in the mirror and spit in my face – puah! – in order to awake, to return from what happened to me... is it reasonable? I can't believe [...]. Twenty-five years! I gave you my health, wellness, and youth. What more do you want? [...] Do you want to eat my flesh and throw my bones away? Everyone knew I was dumb. I was the only one to think myself Christ on earth. Everyone here and there in Naples, all the people laughed at Domenico Soriano" (my translation).

skeleton], meaning “you use me when I had something to offer and threw me out when I was finished” (Badawi and Hinds 1986: 783).

A mitigation process is carried out translating the cue “m’hanno pigliato pe’ fesso” [they used me as a patsy] that is rendered in standard Arabic with *al-dunyā kullu-hum ḍahikū ‘alay-ya* and in Egyptian Arabic with *id-dunyā kulla-ha ḍahikit ‘ala Domenico Soriano*, both meaning “all laughed at me/Domenico Soriano” and expressing the man’s feeling of deceit, but in a softer way with respect to the original sentence that is more severe.

Another passage shows a cross-cultural transfer achieved through rhetorical devices.

FILUMENA (*ironica*) Quanto me faie ridere! E quanto me faie pena! Ma che me ne mporta ‘e te, d’ ‘a figliola che t’ha fatto perdere ‘a capa, ‘e tutto chello ca me dice? Ma tu te cride overo ca io ll’aggio fatto pe’ te? Ma io nun te curo, nun t’aggio maie curato. Na femmena comm’ a mme, ll’he ditto tu e mm’ ‘o stai dicenno ‘a vinticinque anne, se fa ‘e cunte. Me sierve... Tu, me sierve! Tu te credive ca doppo vinticinque anne c’aggiu fatto ‘a vaiassa vicino a tte, me ne ievo accussi, cu’ na mano nnanze e n’ata areto<sup>35</sup>? (De Filippo 1951: 13-14)

فيلومينا (ساخرة) كم يضحكني كلامك! كم أشفق عليك! تسألني فيما تهمني أنت وتهمني تلك البنية التي أفقدتك رشذك إلى آخر ما تقول؟ أتعقد حقا أنني فعلت ما فعلت من أجلك؟.. أنت لا تهمني ولم أهتم بك أبدا. امرأة مثلي، كما قلت وكما تردد بعد خمسة وعشرين عاما لها أن تسوى حسابها. أنت تلزمني... تلزمني! أتعقد أنني بعد خمسة وعشرين عاما قضيتها كالغجر بجوارك كنت سأخرج من المولد بلا حمص<sup>36</sup>.

(De Filippo and Soliman 2006: 20)

FILUMENA *Hā, hā, hā! Ḍahikta-ni! Wa-llāhi huwa ṣa‘bān ‘aliy-ya! Law ‘inta fākir ‘inta tihimmi-ni fi hāga ‘inta wi-li-l-bint illi fi l-murā‘a bit‘at-ak? Law ‘inta fākir ‘innu kull illi ‘amalt-uh da, ‘amalt-uh ‘ašann-ak*

<sup>35</sup> “Filumena (ironically): How you make me laugh! I’m so sorry for you! Why do I care about you, about the girl who made you lose your senses and about your words? Do you really think that I did it for you? I don’t care about you; I never did care about you. But a woman like me, as you said before and have been saying for twenty-five years, begins to make plans. You’re useful to me... you, are useful to me! Do you think that after working as your kitchen-maid for twenty-five years I’m just going to get up and leave this house naked as the day I was born?” (my translation).

<sup>36</sup> “Filumena (ironically): How your words make me laugh! I feel so sorry for you! You ask me if I care about you, about that girl who made you lose your senses, and about your words? Do you really think that I did what I did for you? I’m not interested in you and I never was. A woman like me, as you said and repeats after twenty-five years, has to make her plans. You’re useful to me... you are useful to me! Do you think that after twenty-five years that I spent like a servant near you I would leave the fair without any chick-peas?” (my translation).



*'inta, la' ya-ḥū-ya, bas lāzim 'a'id ḥisābāt-i wi-la 'āyz-ni ba'da l-'umr da kull-uh 'aṭla' min il-mūlid bala ḥummuṣ*<sup>37</sup>. (De Filippo and Rigillo 1998)

In the Egyptian text a resonant onomatopoeia introduces the cue, a hearty laugh instead of saying “how you make me laugh!”. A change of subject modifies the ironic sentence “e quanto me faie pena!”, corresponding to the standard Arabic *kam 'ašfaq 'alay-ka* [I feel so sorry for you], into *huwa ṣa'bān 'aliy-ya* [he's sorry for me].

A series of ellipsis occur in the Egyptian Arabic translation, omitting the following utterances: “e tutto chello ca me dice?” [and all you tell me?]; “ma io nun te curo, nun t'aggio maie curato. Na femmena comm' a mme, ll'he ditto tu e mm' 'o stai dicenno 'a vinticinque anne, se fa 'e cunte” [I don't care about you, I never did care about you. But a woman like me, as you said before and have been saying for twenty five years, begins to make plans]; only the utterance “se fa 'e cunte” is translated into standard Arabic, as *tusawwī ḥisāba-hā* [she makes her plans], and, with a change of subject, into Egyptian Arabic, as *lāzim 'a'id ḥisābāt-i* [it is necessary that I make my plans]. It must be said that the source text meaning is transmitted and not lost in translation, thanks to some implicit suggestions, though the omission of the utterance “me serve... tu, me serve!” [you are useful to me... you, are useful to me!] in the vernacular version, deprives the dialogue of expressive force.

A noteworthy translation of the utterance “tu te credive ca doppo vinticinque anne c'aggiu fatto 'a vaiassa vicino a tte, me ne ievo accussi, cu' na mano nnanze e n'ata areto?” [do you think that after working as your kitchen-maid for twenty-five years I'm just going to get up and leave this house naked as the day I was born? / with one hand in the front and another behind?] is given in both Arabic versions: in standard Arabic as *'a ta'taqidu 'ann-ī ba'da ḥamsa wa-'iṣrīna 'āman qaḍaytu-hā ka-l-ḡaḡari bi-ḡiḡwāri-ka kuntu sa-'aḥruḡu mina l-mawlid bi-lā ḥummuṣ?*; in Egyptian Arabic as *law 'inta fākir 'innu kull illi 'amalt-uh da, 'amalt-uh 'ašann-ak 'inta, la' ya-ḥū-ya, bas lāzim 'a'id ḥisābāt-i wi-la 'āyz-ni ba'da l-'umr da kull-uh 'aṭla' min il-mūlid ba-la ḥummuṣ*. The same phraseological solution is chosen, the image to go away from a party (*al-mawlid/il-mūlid*) without having enjoyed it (eating at least a chick-peas) [Leave the fair without any chick-peas].<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> “Filumena: Ha, ha, ha! How you make me laugh! For God's sake, he's sorry for me! Do you think I'm interested in something of you and the girl you care about? Do you think that I did what I did for you? No, my brother, instead it is necessary that I make my plans and I don't want, after an entire life, to leave the fair without any chick-peas” (my translation).

<sup>38</sup> It is said of one who gets nothing out of an affair from which he might expect to profit.

Finally, it is interesting to notice a case in which translators do not resort to a local idiomatic expression to mean “a coughing flea” (an insignificant being that makes noise)<sup>39</sup> and retain the same style and expressivity in the target language. Soliman inserts a footnote to explain the utterance, but it is to be supposed that the Egyptian audience can easily comprehend it, as the same solution is chosen for the stage performance.

ALFREDO Rosali', ched'è... he perza 'a lengua?

ROSALIA Nun t'aggio visto.

ALFREDO Nun t'aggio visto? E che sso' nu pòlice ncopp' 'a sta seggia?

ROSALIA (*ambigua*) Eh, nu pòlice c' 'a tosse<sup>40</sup>. (De Filippo 1951: 28)

الفريڊو روزاليا، ماذا جرى؟ هل فقدت لسانك؟  
روزاليا (في عدم اكتراث) لم أرك.  
الفريڊو لم أرك؟ أبر غوث هذا الجالس على المقعد؟  
روزاليا (في غموض) بر غوث يكح<sup>41</sup>.

(De Filippo and Soliman 2006: 40)

ALFREDO 'Ēh ya sitt Rosalia, ma fiš šabāḥ il-ḥēr?

ROSALIA Ma šuft-ak-š.

ALFREDO Ma šuft-ak-š. Lēh? Barḡūt 'ayd 'ala l-kursi?

ROSALIA 'Aywa. Barḡūt wi-bi-yikuḥḥ.<sup>42</sup> (De Filippo and Rigillo 1998)

Similarly, in the English versions the same passage is mostly translated maintaining the image of the “flea,” except in De Filippo, Waterhouse and Hall 1978 where the translators resort to the idiom “to be part of the furniture,” that means “something or someone so familiar that you no longer notice it, him, her” (Cambridge Dictionary 2020).<sup>43</sup> While De Filippo and Tucci 2002 (first edition in 1996) and De Filippo and Wertenbaker 1998 use a standardization strategy, De Filippo, Waterhouse and Hall

<sup>39</sup> The expression derives from the Italian proverb “anche le pulci hanno la tosse” [even fleas have a cough].

<sup>40</sup> “Alfredo: Rosalia, what’s going on? Lost your tongue?/ Rosalia: I’ve not seen you/ Alfredo: I’ve not seen you? And what am I? A flea on this chair?/ Rosalia (*ambiguously*): Yes, a flea with a cough” (my translation).

<sup>41</sup> “Alfredo: Rosalia, what happened? Lost your tongue?/ Rosalia (*absently*): I’ve not seen you/ Alfredo: Haven’t you seen me? Is this, sitting on the chair, a flea?/ Rosalia (*ambiguously*): A flea with a cough” (my translation).

<sup>42</sup> “Alfredo: Lady Rosalia, no good morning wish?/ Rosalia: I’ve not seen you./ Alfredo: You’ve not seen me. Why? Am I a flea on the chair?/ Rosalia: Yes, you’re a flea with a cough” (my translation).

<sup>43</sup> <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>>.

1978 prefer to domesticate the text, reducing “the foreign text to target language cultural values” (Venuti 1995: 15). Indeed, in their translation the image of the “flea” is replaced as follows:

ALFREDO You didn’t see me? What did you think I was? Part of the furniture? Where’ve you been?

ROSALIA To Mass, of course. Where do you think?

## 7. Conclusion

Assumed that the translation of a theatre script, which is generally conceived to be performed on the stage, is “an act of cultural appropriation of the source text by the receiving culture” but also “a means to introduce the Other into a given culture” (De Martino Cappuccio 2011: 49), the Arabic translators of *Filumena Marturano* can be considered as failing to represent Eduardo’s language choices that have a crucial role in depicting characters and events according to the social context of their time. A general neutralization of the foreign culture, through standardization or homogenization with the Egyptian culture, emerges from the two translations. Although the standard Arabic version – an accurate work made by a scholar who introduced Eduardo’s theatre into the Arabic readers’ milieu – maintains at least a subtle bond to a dichotomist perspective of the speech community, the Otherness is largely reduced, except for keeping some Neapolitan words and idiomatic expressions or clichés, otherwise lacking correspondence with the source language skopos. As to the Egyptian Arabic translation – the work of a group of translators aiming at making the play enjoyable to the theatre audience – the target culture preconceived ideas affect the process of translation, making the text more familiar to Egyptians and distant from Eduardo’s language and minimalist style, with the effect of weakening the originally embedded cultural message.

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